Reading the 997 Acknowledgement from MassHealth

Each time a HIPAA-compliant electronic claims file is submitted to MassHealth, a system-generated 997 acknowledgement is sent to the submitter within two business days. A 997 does not guarantee payment; it only signifies that MassHealth received a file. The following explains how to read the 997 to find out whether a file is accepted or rejected. If a file is accepted, no action is required by the submitter and the claims will appear on a future remittance advice (RA). If a file is rejected, the submitter will need to correct the errors and submit the corrected file to MassHealth.

What to look for in the 997

Locate all the AK9 segments. This indicates whether or not the submitted files passed the HIPAA compliance check. If each AK9 segment appears as **AK9*A,** this means the entire file was **accepted** for adjudication. The claims will then complete the adjudication process and appear on a remittance advice as paid, denied, or suspended.

If any AK9 segments begin with **AK9*R** or **AK9*P**, it means the file was either **rejected ("R")** or partially **accepted ("P")**. At this point, review the AK5 segments for any and all AK5Rs. This segment displays which transaction set or sets have been rejected.

Compliance errors

When a file (AK9*R) or a transaction set (AK5*R) is rejected, the reasons are coded in segments AK3 and AK4. The AK3 and AK4 segments identify exactly where the compliance issue exists.

An AK3 segment will appear as:

- **AK3*NM1*222**3**

  In this example "NM1" is the segment,"222" is the line number, and "3" is the error code. Because the ISA and GS segments of a file are not counted, add 2 to the given line number to locate the line that needs correction.

An AK4 segment will appear as:

- **AK4*8**1**

  In this example, "8" is the data element (e.g., NM108) and "1" is the error code.

The following is a list of the most common 997 error codes:
- Error 1: mandatory data element missing
- Error 2: conditional required data element missing
- Error 3: mandatory segment missing
- Error 5: one or more segments in error
- Error 6: invalid character in data element (Frequently, this means that a punctuation mark is appearing in a segment, causing the segment to be unreadable.)
- Error 8: segment has data element errors
- Error 10: requested service not available (This means that there is a character, such as a colon, in the file that can also be used to divide segments or elements.)

For additional information, consult Appendix B of any 837 implementation guide. Free internet files (PDF) of the implementation guides may be obtained by logging on to www.wpc-edi.com and following the links to "HIPAA" and "HIPAA Guides."